

PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SECOND SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Music Director

Pierre Boulez Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

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Thursday, June 6, 2013, at 8:00

Friday, June 7, 2013, at 1:30

Saturday, June 8, 2013, at 8:00

Tuesday, June 11, 2013, at 7:30

Riccardo Muti Conductor

Eugene Izotov Oboe

Haydn

Symphony No. 48 in C Major (*Maria Theresa*)

Allegro

Adagio

Menuet: Allegretto

Finale: Allegro

Martinů

Oboe Concerto

Moderato

Poco andante

Poco allegro

EUGENE IZOTOV

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

INTERMISSION

Scriabin

Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 43 (*The Divine Poem*)

Lento—Luttes (Allegro)—

Voluptés (Lento)—

Jeu divin (Allegro)

These performances have been enabled by the Juli Grainger Fund.

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Joseph Haydn

Born March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Lower Austria.

Died May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria.

Symphony No. 48 in C Major (*Maria Theresa*)

In Austria, we can still see a likeness of the empress Maria Theresa on large silver coins. Today they are collectors' items, although during her lifetime the coins were everyday currency. She appears somewhat overweight (the result, perhaps, of having sixteen children by her vigorous husband, Emperor Franz I) and she has the haughty bearing of someone accustomed to wealth and entitlement since childhood. She was apparently so charming, however, that when the six-year-old Mozart visited the palace in 1762, he climbed into her capacious lap and gave her a kiss.

Joseph Haydn and the empress met under more dignified circumstances. On September 1, 1773, Maria Theresa visited Eszterháza,

the magnificent country estate of Haydn's employer, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. That evening, after a performance of Haydn's opera *L'infedeltà delusa*, the empress was taken to the prince's fanciful new Chinese pavilion on the palace grounds, where she found the composer and his orchestra, attired in Chinese costumes, waiting to give a concert. The following day, she was treated to three hazel hens (European grouse) that Haydn shot in her honor, which she evidently ate with enthusiasm, and to Haydn's marionette opera *Philemon und Baucis*, which so delighted her that, four years later, she invited the puppet troupe to Schönbrunn. Prince Nikolaus introduced his kapellmeister to the empress, and before she

COMPOSED

1769

May 20, 1993,
Orchestra Hall. Daniel
Barenboim conducting

**APPROXIMATE
PERFORMANCE TIME**
27 minutes

FIRST PERFORMANCE

September 1, 1773;
Esterháza, Austria. The
composer conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

May 27, 2003,
Orchestra Hall. Daniel
Barenboim conducting

CSO RECORDING

A 1993 performance with
Daniel Barenboim conduct-
ing is included on *From the
Archives*, vol. 20

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

July 20, 1971, Ravinia
Festival. István
Kertész conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

two oboes, bassoon, two
horns, two trumpets,
timpani, strings

left she gave Haydn a valuable gold snuffbox filled with coins.

This brilliant C major symphony is apparently the one Haydn and his orchestra played for the empress in the mirrored splendor of the Chinese pavilion. The years surrounding Maria Theresa's visit were the most productive of Haydn's life; his output—in symphony, string quartet, piano sonata, mass, and opera—is not only enormous, but of an astonishing and consistently high level. During these years, Haydn wrote several symphonies in C major with high horn parts; with their bright sound and nervous energy, they are among the glories of the Haydn literature.

The C major symphony we know as no. 48 was written in 1769; Haydn either saved it or decided to revive it for the empress's visit four years later. It was an ideal choice, for it is filled with a sense of occasion, and, from the opening measure, with music of great pomp and festivity. The first movement, with its wildly reeling horn parts, is a fanfare enlarged to full sonata-form proportions, including a wealth of melodies and encompassing an unusually far-ranging key scheme. The slow movement,

with oboe and horn solos, is a gentle interlude; the tone is one of restraint and courtly courtesy. The



A portrait of Maria Theresa with her family, by Martin van Meytens (detail)

minuet is music of ceremony rather than dance; a trio, in C minor, briefly darkens the mood. “Let there be spectacles” is the most famous line attributed to Maria Theresa; if so, she surely loved the sensational, high-energy finale of the Haydn symphony that would later bear her name. ■



Bohuslav Martinů

Born December 8, 1890, Polička, eastern Bohemia.

Died August 28, 1959, Liestal, Switzerland.

Oboe Concerto

Bohuslav Martinů was born 193 steps above the ground in a bell tower, where his father served as watchman of the village church. Bohuslav, who lived in the tower overlooking the streets of the tiny Bohemian town of Polička until he was thirteen, was reclusive and shy, with little curiosity about the world beyond his immediate view. All that changed when he heard the new French music by Debussy and Ravel and decided to go to Paris. He left Polička in 1923 on a state grant that would support him for three months, and ended up staying in Paris for seventeen years. (For the rest of his life, however, he carried a postcard of the view from his boyhood home.)

Despite his shyness and difficulty with the French language, Martinů thrived in Paris, then the artistic capital of Europe. He studied with Albert Roussel; made the acquaintance of Serge Koussevitzky, who would later introduce his music to

the United States; and began to mingle with members of a wide variety of artistic circles. (Perhaps most unpredictably, he fell in love with the new jazz style that was just taking Paris by storm.) In 1930, he married Charlotte Quennehen, a seamstress, and his life began to fall into place. His music was performed more regularly, both in Europe and in the U.S.

In 1940, Martinů was blacklisted by the Nazis. On June 10, four days before the Germans entered Paris, the Martinůs fled the city, leaving all their possessions behind. For the next several months, they were homeless and often slept on railway platforms. (Despite the hardships, Bohuslav continued to compose.) They finally gained passage on the *Exeter*, which left Lisbon for Hoboken, New Jersey, on March 21, 1941. (His American visa described him as a “blacklisted intellectual.”) Martinů found it difficult to think

COMPOSED

1955

FIRST PERFORMANCE

August 8, 1956; Sydney, Australia

These are the first Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

INSTRUMENTATION

solo oboe, two flutes, two clarinets, one bassoon, two horns, one trumpet, piano, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

17 minutes

of New York City as his new home; he was overwhelmed by the pace of the city and suffered frequent spells of depression. As a kind of welcome gesture, Koussevitzky commissioned Martinů to compose his first symphony, which was premiered in Boston in 1942—the first of six he would write during the sixteen years he lived in this country—and invited him to teach at Tanglewood.

In 1955, the year Martinů took American citizenship, he was commissioned to write this oboe concerto for the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia. It was written for the Czech oboist Jíří Tancibudek, who had settled in Sydney. When Tancibudek received the score of the concerto, he was surprised to discover that it was accompanied by a note from the composer: “Feel free to make final adjustments in the virtuoso passages to suite your own personal technique and the possibilities of the instrument.” Although Tancibudek did indeed incorporate some changes in the concerto he premiered in August of 1956, the score had still not found its final form. He and Martinů met in Basel, Switzerland, in March of 1958, to agree on several further alterations, which the composer marked in ink on the original manuscript. Martinů also wanted to thin down the orchestration of

the boisterous finale in order to better showcase the solo oboe, but he died the following year, before that work could be done.

Throughout the concerto, there is a delicate interplay between solo oboe and Martinů’s small orchestra. All three movements have chamber music-like textures; the piano plays a prominent role in both the mysterious, haunting slow second movement and the spirited finale. Martinů demands everything of his solo oboe, from virtuoso fireworks to long-breathed melody and exotic ornamental flourishes. Martinů originally even wrote two cadenzas into the finale, but he and Tancibudek decided to omit the second one (as does Eugene Izotov at this week’s performances), agreeing that one cadenza was all that was needed.

Martinů left the U.S. in 1957 and settled in Switzerland, where he and Tancibudek made their final revisions of this concerto. Martinů died in there in 1959. Twenty years later, his body was moved to the family plot in Polička. ■



Serge Koussevitzky



Alexander Scriabin

Born January 6, 1872, Moscow, Russia.

Died April 27, 1915, Moscow, Russia.

Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 43 (*The Divine Poem*)

From his youth, when he interpreted the significance of his birth on Christmas Day as a sign that he should do great things, Scriabin believed he would play a decisive role in the history of music. But his early death at the age of forty-three cut short his career just as he was venturing into pioneer territory. Like many composers of a less revolutionary bent, Scriabin started his musical life as a pianist and his composing career writing only piano pieces. In 1884, he began to study piano with Nicolai Zverev, who had already accepted Sergei Rachmaninov as a pupil. The two students became good friends—Scriabin was older by just one year—though they were sometimes later portrayed as rivals once their musical ambitions ventured in different directions. At the time they met, both Scriabin and Rachmaninov were beginning to compose piano pieces

for themselves to play. In 1888, Scriabin entered the Moscow Conservatory, where he excelled equally as a pianist and composer. When he graduated in 1892, he was awarded the second gold medal in composition (Rachmaninov took first place, for his opera *Aleko*).

After Scriabin left the conservatory, he began a career as a concert pianist. While his recital programs often included music by Schumann and Liszt, two composers who also started out as pianists, Scriabin's particular favorite was Chopin. That influence is reflected not only in his repertoire, but in the titles and nature of the music he wrote at the time—sets of preludes, impromptus, etudes, and even Polish mazurkas. To study the first nineteen opus numbers in Scriabin's catalog, all pieces for piano solo, one would never predict the important orchestral music that would quickly follow.

COMPOSED

1902–1904

FIRST PERFORMANCE

May 29, 1905; Paris, France

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

January 19, 1923,
Orchestra Hall. Frederick
Stock conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

October 20, 1992,
Orchestra Hall. Valery
Gergiev conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo,
three oboes and english
horn, three clarinets
and bass clarinet, three

bassoons and contrabas-
soon, eight horns, five
trumpets, three trombones
and tuba, timpani, percus-
sion, two harps, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

50 minutes

The move away from writing solo piano music was a tough and decisive step for all the pianist-composers of the nineteenth century. For Chopin, it came of necessity; the piano recital was not yet a common part of concert life in the 1820s, and Chopin needed concertos to play in his appearances with orchestras. For Schumann, it took the powerful influence of his wife Clara to encourage him to start writing for the orchestra. Like Chopin, Liszt wrote piano concertos as a means of expanding his superstar solo career and box office appeal, and it was only after he retired from the concert stage in 1848 that he could devote time to writing for orchestra alone. More contemporary with Scriabin, Brahms struggled with leaving the comfort of the piano bench behind; he began writing for orchestra in small, tentative steps, and then spent two decades perfecting his first symphony.

Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, and Brahms were already mature artists with individual and recognizable styles when they moved beyond composing exclusively for the piano. But when Scriabin wrote a piano concerto in 1896—the first of his works to call for orchestra—he had not yet discovered the voice that would ultimately make his music unique. The Chopinesque concerto scarcely hints at the direction Scriabin’s career would take. Three years later, he began his first symphony.

The traditional form of the symphony would only briefly

satisfy Scriabin’s musical ambitions. All three of the works he called symphony were composed within a five-year period, and already with the third—the one performed this week—Scriabin felt the need for a descriptive subtitle, *The Divine Poem*, recognizing that his ideas were beginning to outgrow the symphonic model. *The Divine Poem* is the pivotal work in Scriabin’s output. He did not even bother to label the two grand orchestral pieces he wrote afterwards, *The Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus*, as symphonies. Both of those works are single-movement tone poems, if any conventional title can do justice to their extraordinary form and substance. *The Divine Poem* is a transitional work in another sense, for it marks Scriabin’s transformation from a promising composer to a true original. Around the time of its composition, in the first years of the twentieth century, Scriabin fell under the spell of philosophical and mystical ideas that dominated his thoughts for the rest of his life and completely changed the music he wrote. In addition, Rimsky-Korsakov introduced Scriabin to the idea of a correspondence between music and color as early as 1902, the year he began *The Divine Poem*. The two composers shared many opinions on the subject, including their dismay with Wagner’s Magic Fire Music from *The Ring*. “He uses the wrong tonality,” Scriabin said, “and repeats the music in different keys!” (They both thought it should be in G.) Scriabin eventually developed his own music-color wheel—he and

Rimsky ultimately agreed only on the identity of yellow and D.

The *Divine Poem* is the first of Scriabin's works to address his new ideas through the suggestive yet imprecise language of music. At the premiere in Paris in 1905, the following note, presumably dictated by Scriabin, was distributed: "*The Divine Poem* represents the evolution of the human spirit, which, freed from the legends and mysteries of the past that it has surmounted and overthrown, passes through pantheism and achieves a joyful and exhilarating affirmation of its liberty and its unity with the universe."

The Divine Poem is the longest work Scriabin wrote. It is scored for a very large orchestra, handled with the care and imagination—and a sheer delight in unrestrained symphonic sound—of a much more experienced orchestrator. It is also the first of his works to be called a poem, signaling the shift from abstract symphony to a new, unnameable kind of music, and to use French as the language of its abundant expressive markings (the opening theme of the *Allegro*, for example, is to be *mystérieux, tragique*).

There are three linked movements, preceded by a powerful short introduction. Throughout his *Third Symphony*, Scriabin is working towards a tight thematic integration of his material—the broad opening motif, for example, is incorporated into the first theme of the ensuing *Allegro*—and to motivic connections between the

movements. He is already moving in the direction of the highly unified single movement as his ideal form, the one he would use for nearly all his last works. Scriabin's evolving language is one of harmonic ambiguity and a fleeting, uncertain sense of rhythmic pulse (recalling his own highly rhapsodic style of piano playing, which was known for its freedom and unpredictability).

The first movement, *Luttes* (*Struggles*), depicts the conflict, in Scriabin's words, "between man as the slave of a personal God and man as God in himself." The latter wins, but only after a closely argued, magnificent stretch of music as volatile, flexible, and many-faceted as anything written at the time.

Voluptés (*Pleasures*), the second movement, basks in the delights of the sensuous world. This is voluptuous, even erotic music. (For the New York performance in 1907, Scriabin authorized a translation of the title as *Ecstasies*.) We are immersed in the sounds of nature, long before Bartók's night music or Messiaen's birdsong. Scriabin's ear for color is extraordinary (this was composed as he and Rimsky-Korsakov were beginning their investigation into the linking of color and sound). Scriabin later admitted that the hushed opening, for winds alone, was intended to evoke the sound of a far-off organ. The solo violin represents Man, as "his personality loses itself in nature."

In the final movement, *Jeu divin* (*Divine play*), "the spirit, freed

from its submission to a superior power and conscious of its unity with the universe, abandons itself to the supreme joy of a free existence.” This exhilarating music held a special place in Scriabin’s memory: “This was the first time I found light in music,” he later said. “The first time I knew intoxication, flight, the breathlessness of happiness.”

In the ten years he had left after writing *The Divine Poem*, Scriabin ventured farther into the great unknown, where music and color are closely linked, and where “art must unite with philosophy and religion in an indivisible whole to form a new gospel.” After his Fifth Piano Sonata, composed in 1907, he broke with tonality. A single dissonant chord, the so-called mystical chord, provided the foundation for all of his final compositions. He had, in effect, created a new system of tonal organization to replace traditional harmony.

After his death, no one truly followed his path (Prokofiev and Szymanowski briefly came under his spell), and, in the end, despite the urgency and fierce passion of his ideas, he did not—to use current parlance—make a difference. Stravinsky, who disliked both Scriabin and his music, once commented, “Although his death was tragic and premature, I have sometimes wondered at the kind of music such a man would have written had he survived into the 1920s.” Scriabin’s original language was, in its own way, as revolutionary as that of Mahler, Strauss, Schoenberg, or Debussy, all of whom were writing at the same time. It is difficult to know where Scriabin was headed, and how he might ultimately have changed the course of music. ■

Phillip Huscher is the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.